

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
November 6th, 2009

From the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE):

Commissioner Gist announces [Race to the Top](#) community forums

Finance Office announces annual rebates on [office supplies](#)

[Adult-education director](#) to be assigned to U.S. Department of Education

From the U.S. Department of Education (ED):

ED issues guidance on [privacy issues](#) and H1N1

Other:

Nellie Mae Education Foundation seeks applicants for [Catalyst for Change Awards](#)

From RIDE:

Commissioner Gist announces Race to the Top community forums

As we prepare our Race to the Top application, I have scheduled five community forums to give people an opportunity to discuss our five priorities for transforming Rhode Island education and to

offer input and feedback on the grant application. I believe that each of you has received from RISSA copies of the notice of these forums. Here is a link to my letter inviting people to attend these forums:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/RaceToTheTop/>

In the coming days, we will post a downloadable version of this letter, in both English and Spanish, as well as fliers announcing each of the five forums. I encourage you to distribute this information to your entire school community. I hope for an excellent turnout at each forum!

Finance Office to distribute annual rebates on office supplies

I am pleased to announce that W.B. Mason has calculated the FY 2009 rebates for school and office supplies. School districts will receive a total of \$256,029 in rebates, which is a \$24,000 increase from last year. Districts should receive rebate checks in a few days.

We are in our third year of a three-year contract with W.B. Mason. This year, we had 100% participation in the program, covering all districts, charter schools, and state-operated schools. All participants commit to purchasing available school and office supplies through this MPA. It is important that we continue this level of participation, as this will lead to a more competitive bid for these supplies in the next RFP process.

Here is a link to a spreadsheet showing the rebate for each district:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/funding/School%20Business/Mason%20File/WB%20Mason%20Rebate_2009.pdf

Adult-education director to be assigned to U.S. Department of Education

In December, Johan Uvin, the RIDE director of adult and career & technical education, will begin a two-year assignment as a special advisor at the U.S. Department of Education. Here is a copy of the letter that I sent this week to directors of adult-education agencies and programs:

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing you with an important update to let you know that Johan Uvin will be going to Washington, D.C., on a two-year assignment through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act program, in response to a call for service effective early December. Johan's role will be to act as a senior advisor to the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier.

I feel honored for the state and for RIDE that Johan has been asked to contribute to the critical areas of work under the oversight of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Johan will bring to this assignment his commitment to access and outcomes for all students and his ability to forge interagency collaborations and effective partnerships with the private sector to solve critical workforce issues. I am confident that his work with the leadership at the U.S. Department of Education will greatly benefit youth and adult students across the nation and in Rhode Island.

We have a five- to eight-week transition period during which Johan and I will work closely with Governor Carcieri's office and our partner agencies to ensure that adult education will be able to maintain its elevated status in education and in the community, secure staff support to continue the important reform work, provide leadership, and, most important, continue the process of improving student outcomes.

Johan and I will keep you informed throughout this transition period, as we reach transition milestones. After the transition period and to the extent necessary, Dr. Roy Seitsinger will provide senior management oversight.

Feel free to contact Johan or me with any questions or suggestions regarding this transition.

From the U.S. Department of Education (ED):

ED issues guidance on privacy issues and H1N1

The ED Family Policy Compliance Office has issued the following notice:

To improve preparedness in response to the H1N1 flu outbreak, the U.S. Department of Education has issued guidance under the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) to answer questions that school officials may have concerning the disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII) from students' education records to outside entities when addressing an H1N1 flu outbreak. Understanding how, what, and when information can be

shared is a critical part of preparedness. The guidance is available at

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/pdf/ferpa-h1n1.pdf>.

The Department's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) is available to respond to any questions school officials may have about FERPA. For quick responses to routine questions about FERPA, school officials may e-mail FPCO at FERPA@ed.gov. School officials may also call FPCO at (202) 260-3887.

Additional information and guidance on FERPA is available on FPCO's web site at

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/>.

If you have any other questions about pandemic planning, please e-mail the Department's dedicated mailbox at flu@ed.gov.

Other:

Nellie Mae Education Foundation seeks applicants for Catalyst for Change Awards

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation has announced the following grant opportunity:

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is seeking applications from organizations across New England that are working to personalize students' educational experiences.

Historically, student-centered personalized learning has defined certain aspects of the Nellie Mae Education

Foundation's grantmaking. The Foundation is interested in learning more about a student-centered personalized focus predicated on youth development principles and innovative notions about what, when, and where students learn and by whom they are taught. We believe there are many models throughout the region that have been successful at transforming the lives of underserved and other learners and we want to learn more about those models from you. The knowledge that you share with us could play an important role in shaping the Foundation's future strategies.

Up to twelve applications will be awarded a one-time grant of \$50,000. The Foundation will announce the winners in December. In addition we expect to showcase successful applications in order to broaden the understanding about the wide variety of ways quality educational opportunities can be organized and provided.

The deadline for submissions is 12 p.m. on November 23, 2009

For more information on eligibility and how to apply, please download the [Request for Applications](#) from the Foundation's website.

If you have any questions, please email rfp@nmefdn.org